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MY LAST FRIEND

DOG DICK

EDMONDO DE AMICIS

TRANSLATED BY J. G. LISTA, EDITED BY MARY E. BURT





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My Last Friend  
Dog Dick

Translated by J. G. LISTA

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From the Original Italian, "Il mio Ultimo Amico"  
(My Last Friend), of Edmondo de Amicis

*“The mission of the true genius is to discover new paths to the stars.”*

H. T. SCHNITTKIND

✓  
My Last Friend

DOG DICK

By EDMONDO DE AMICIS  
||



Translated by

J. G. Sista

Edited by MARY M. BURT ✓

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*“To my Teacher”*

BY THE TRANSLATOR



# My Dog Dick, My Last Friend

DE AMICIS

Translated by J. G. Lista

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Come. Here I am, sitting in the arm-chair, at your service. Come here and take a nap on my lap just as you do every day.

Would I have dreamed a year ago, that I should get into the habit of taking an afternoon nap with a dog?

For it is now just a year since my little son brought him home wrapped in the half of a newspaper like a roasted pigeon and placed him on the floor where he made me laugh again for the first time in years by taking a frog-like posture, waddling on his hind legs spread wide apart, white and round like a ball of cotton. Poor Dick! He was taken away from his mother and brothers when scarcely weaned and brought to this house which had been stricken by misfortune. But it seemed that he quickly understood why we took him and what we expected from him.

He did not allow himself to be alarmed at being in a stranger's house. He did not com-

plain of its loneliness, and immediately responded to our caresses with demonstrations of affection.

He made us feel from the first that he surely would become for us, not only a pleasant distraction, but a companion and a comforter, and in time no matter how much care we had given him, if we should count up the debts of reciprocal gratitude, he would surely be the creditor.

Yes, dear Dick, you are not any more a dog for us. You are a friend. And you are just the one that we really needed for our house, a friend that does not talk nor laugh.

Never mind me. I am only talking to myself. You can sleep on.

Among the many debts of gratitude which I owe him is this special one, that he caused me to discontinue an injustice. I was unjust to all his kind; not because I hated it, but because I never loved it. I had never had a dog. I did not know anything about dogs except what I had learned from conversations with my friends or from the pages of some writer.

The marvels and tenderness of which I had heard or read I did not believe to be anything more than flowers of fantasy.

No, I could not have imagined that a dog

could occupy so much space in a man's heart and enter so deeply into his life. Little by little I have become convinced of it by seeing him grow up in my house.

Now this little living being that, while he runs distressing around the room with an air of idleness, eaten up by weariness, and while he runs in haste with the anxiety of busy, hard labor, peering into every hole, searching every corner, scrutinizing every dark spot like a detective,—stealing handkerchiefs and balls of cotton,—allows himself to be pursued. And he acts as if he got enjoyment out of us while he runs about with a stolen article in his mouth.

Sometimes he assaults fearlessly a large and vigorous man, and then frightened to death, he runs away in front of a mere simpleton. He fools around for an hour with a newspaper, does the furious lion against a shoe, smells the letters like a lover,\* and noses books like a book-lover, and listens at the door like a spy.

Yes, I am talking of you, Dick, as long as you are awake and looking at me—yes you who answers my scolding with a growl; and endur-

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\*This is explained by one of my critics: "Each lady perfumes her letters with some fragrant powder . . . the lover knows one from another, and prefers that of his own lady." EDITOR.

ing my frown, like a mischievous urchin, you stare back after your bad behavior as if it were honest guilt; and you turn around to look at me with gratitude when I pass my hand over your head, and you give me a kiss with a lick of your tongue, and you stretch one of your paws over my mouth to stop my whistle that annoys your nerves; and follow with your eye every gesture, and turn at every sound in the conversation when we are talking about you, as if you understood the meaning of the words;\* and you pass continually from manifestations of an intelligence that bewilders us, to signs of stupidity that become inexplicable by the comparison, and you appear repeatedly in the space of an hour, grave like a man, joyous like a child, fierce

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\*In a newspaper article in the New York Times, John Burroughs is credited with saying of his dog, Lark: "He understood not only what I said, but what I thought." It is one of the strongest points of De Amicis' work that he greatly fears that Dick does understand a terrible secret in his mind.

John Burroughs' essay, "The Animal Mind," printed long ago in The Atlantic Monthly has become, I believe, the one authority on the mentality of our dumb friends. It is an interesting point in the study of Dick that the two great authors agree that the two dogs understand words, yes words, — and more yet, they understand thoughts. This is the key-note of the work, "Il mio ultimo Amico," and makes the study invaluable as a companion to "The Animal Mind."

Lista says: "You find the spirit of Dick in De Amicis"; and Lark, too, in many ways, resembles in psychological characteristics his gentle master.

M. E. Burt, Editor of "Dick."

like a savage animal, shrewd like a woman, imperious like a tyrant, humble like a beggar. You have become for me an object of curiosity and continued observation, a diversion, a reflection of what is going on every moment, which leads me by a thousand diverse paths to limitless thoughts and imaginings, most remote from you, fancies which fill again every void that, in the years gone by, weariness was wont to penetrate,—and tighten every day, more strongly, the hundreds of fine but strong bonds of our friendship.

Yes, dear Dick.

Do you know who made me feel the first impulse of affection for you?

It was not voluntarily but rather with sharp words to an opposite effect, a gentleman with a heavy beard and many degrees;\* I had sent for him after a month of your being in my house, because you seemed ill.

When he found out that we had been together but a short time he thought that I was tired of having you about. So he was candid and said as soon as he saw you: “He is ugly looking,”

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\*The original says: “heavy beard and laurels”—evidently a doctor with degrees. Apollo was said to wear the laurels,—and later the great poets.

and then added: "and he is a dog without good blood. How much did you pay for him?"

"Thirty cents," I answered. "Not worth it," he said laughingly.

O my poor Dick! "Ugly looking! mongrel!" and not valued at thirty cents!

I felt a great compassion for you and I loved you from that moment because you really had been insulted when I recognized in you one whom Nature had disinherited, and I thought that nowhere else in the world outside of my house would you find good luck.

"Ugly!" "mongrel!" "Paid too much at the price of one pound of meat!" And from that time you appeared to me beautiful,—and of blood as pure as that of the Narcissi of your race, to whom the gold medal is always awarded in the expositions,—and from the very day, overcoming the repulsion of the first days, I began to take you in my arms and press you to my heart, and feel with pleasure in the palm of my hand and on my face, the cool humidity of your little black mouth.

And how quickly you rendered me a recompense! To think that in fifty years I had never enjoyed the satisfaction of seeing a dog on the

street running from far, far away to meet me, and jump and stretch his paws to my knees as if he would give me an affectionate embrace! The first time I experienced boyish joy\* together with surprise which caused me to go home with my overcoat covered with mud up to my belt. And I never noticed it!

My good Dick!

Very soon I began, little by little, to distinguish the different expressions of his eyes, in which I never before saw more than one, an invariable expression, the mute aspect of two black cherries, marked with a luminous point in the centre, like a glistening drop of dew.

Gradually I have recognized the expression of curiosity, the impatience, the pain of being deceived if any least promise of mine failed,—the reproach, the imploring prayer, and also

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\*Charles Eliot Norton told with "a boyish joy" the story of his little dog, Taffy, who came running from the Railroad station, perhaps a half mile distant to greet him after a very long absence, on hearing his whistle.

"Like the Non Plus Ultra musician who discerns one sound of a single chord in an orchestra of hundreds of musicians, you can rest assured that the dog is perceiving something entirely unknown to you," quoth Lista, "something which you will discover when the dog is convinced and serenely goes by.

Perhaps he remains in the obscurity of your knowledge, and curiosity may tickle your feelings, and it occurs to you constantly that you want to know what he observed."

Editor, M. E. B.

the ardent demand, sustained by the sense of its being a right, and the uncertain fear which suspects waggery concealed in the menace, and treachery in the caress; he suspects ostentatious sweetness.

He spies the propitious moment to commit an innocent and tiny robbery.

Oh, how I understand you now when you come and ask me: "Why do you not bid me 'Good Morning'? Why do we not go out to-day? Why is it that we have to wait for our supper? Are you dressing yourself for a stroll? Will you take me along? Will you please do me the favor to open that door? O what is that noise that comes from the street, tell me, you who know all and even when you tell me, how can you be in good humor with that low crowd that shows that it hates dogs? It would kill me, kick me to death if I were not your dog."

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\*"You can not convince an animal as you can a person," quoth John o'Birds. "The animal has no REASON to convince."

Darwin, he says, quotes the case of a fish that tried for three months to catch another fish that was in a separate aquarium, and then gave it up, not because it was convinced, or exercised intelligence, but because it was trained to a new habit, "trained as we train a tree against a wall." Burroughs imputes to inherited impulse what seems mental processes. "The dog is convinced before he is born," writes Lista. "A man can be reached only through his mind," is the opinion of Burroughs. But an animal is the creature of habit. "We can not develop its mind as we can that of a child."

Editor, M. E. B.

Here he is again, awake,—he who watches over me if I'm sleeping.

I'm not sleeping, no; but you can remain, little friend. Why, what is the matter with you!

I just stretched out my hand to pat him, and he gave a screech and drew his head back as if to shun a blow, at the same time casting on me a look of fear.

What in the world! I had never struck him, nor had any one else in this house. Nor had anybody ever struck him in the few days which had passed between his birth and change of residence.

How ever could he fear a harm with which he had never had any experience, and which he ought not to recognize?

Was it not heredity, that terror of the man's hand, when he felt my sudden act, an act not explained by my countenance as at other times? Surely, that must be the explanation.

O, poor Dick! Who knows how many blows were dealt out to his ancestors, since he descends from a line of vulgar canines? Perhaps not one in half a century attained to the value of a dollar. It may be that not one of them was ever missed by his master: but he may have had

the honor of a public advertisement, offering a miserable reward,—the highest point in the fortunes of a progeny of vagabonds, whose hunger was never satisfied, miserable servants of the glebe wagon, and of the dancing victims of the whip of the somer-sault athletes. And it may be that my dear Dick is the only one among hundreds that has known the sweetness of a lump of sugar, or assumed the dignity of a couch of cotton.

O, poor Dick! Who knows what might have passed through my hands, pocket-books, and satchels? Perhaps I have been fitted with gloves made from the skins of his ancestors.

Who knows if any one of the dogs of whose adventures I have read in the newspapers, an unknown dog connected with solving the mystery of a crime, may have been one of his forefathers? Who can tell which one among the many poor beasts belonging to nobody, a dog that I have seen in spasms on the street, encircled by a ring of curious spectators, a dog maimed by a carriage, or dying of hunger or old age,—may not have been a remote father of this my little friend who was predestined to occupy such a large portion of my thoughts

and infuse so much affection in my heart that his slightest illness worries me the same as if it were the illness of a small child which had been entrusted to me by the parents?

My poor Dick,—faithful friend! You come over at every day-break to give me a “Good Morning”! as if this augury would have a significance for me, and when I am irritated to see the sun and I drive you away, you wait for a better moment and come back. You recognize me from the window that opens into the square and run and bark so that they will open the door for me before I ring the door-bell.

You come and take me away from my writing-desk when a friend enters the house, saying plainly\* to me: “Come; cease for awhile from using up your brain:\*\* they want you!”

And when an importunate singer in the

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\*The psychological point is that the dog has some method of “saying plainly:” &c.

\*\*The original Italian reads: “Cease from distilling your brain.” We all know that a dog will sit by his master and watch over him contentedly while the master sleeps. But he will “worry round” when the master “distils or wastes his brains” in wandering thoughts. The dog plainly recognizes the difference and speaks about it. De Amicis reasons by inference. It is interesting to study his subtle method of approaching the point, “Has the dog a mind?” and see him bring out his evidences. Watch a child at play. Does he distil his brains? Watch a dog, like Dick. Is his mind, yes mind, always on the alert?

court-yard sings a merry song that makes my heart ache, you, barking to him from the terrace to make him stop,—drown out his voice and spare me from that torment.

And when I return at night from the street where I have seen or heard of some infamous action that has filled me with disgust and loathing for the human race, I am comforted by finding in you the virtue and affection which I feel in the darkness from your caress and cheerful greeting at the opening of the door.

And when tired and half sick, I throw myself on the sofa in a state of depression, you restlessly come and lick my hand that hangs down, and say as plainly as you can: "Courage Master!" You know that to see you thus makes my heart ache.

And if I do not pay any attention, you jump up on me and stare at me until I bestir myself. Ah, your black and firm eyes! How many things might they tell, perhaps,—which I do not understand. And perhaps you, too, observe and comprehend much more than I give you credit for. At times, it seems that you understand that I have a persistent and terrible idea, or that you suspect it, and endeavor to divine

what it may be, and at times through my mind there passes the fancy—strange, absurd, incredible—but still deludes for the duration of a flash of lightning, and which makes every nerve in my body quiver, this idea that you *do* know. . . .

Poor Dick! Even to this point your life has intertwined itself with mine, and, thanks to you, I feel again something of that sweetness which for years I haven't felt,—the pleasure that comes to the spirit from the caress given to the little and the weak, by which their fate is in our hands, repeating the affectionate language he hears in babyhood, and giving the predestined caress when infancy no longer exists in the house. The caress of the parent is the child's fortune. In the sleepless hours of the night when I try to avoid thoughts from the present, past, and future, and from every thing which can hold the mind upon the realities of life, it terrifies me that there is need of taking refuge in fancies that are outside of humanity and it is in thoughts of you that I find the refuge; and what you seem to me, of the human spectre and that if I entertain myself with the image I forget the world and am quieted; you

also appear to me in dolorous dreams, even you a cause of grief; but followed by a comforting awakening, it does not give such an acute pain as the other dreams; because after I have dreamed that I have lost you, and sought after you distractedly in the crowded streets of a dark city, or that I could not succour you while I see you bleeding and invoking me with the eyes of the dying under the blows of a strange slave-beater, it is a great joy to me when on waking I hear your affectionate growling and barking, moved by some passion, and your prolonged howls and your affectionate growls close to my face as if you had guessed my dream and come over to say to me in your language:—"Do not fear, you have only dreamed; your Dick is alive and happy; cast out the dread thoughts. Rise from your couch and go to work."

Look at him now! head and ears erect, trembling all over, gazing out of the window. He has heard the distant voice of a brother, from the other side of the square. It is the call of his blood that stirs up the instinct of the errant and free life, the yearning for the society of tailed anarchists from whom I have separated him. Perhaps at this moment he regrets

it and despises his present condition. And he is right. I forget all that I have deprived him of when I think I have done him a benefit by giving him what I have had to give. I do no more than give him what belongs to him by right. I justly owe him the support because I forbid him from getting it himself throughout the world as do his brothers who have no masters. I really owe him the care and caress, because I have kept him in a prison, and I've imposed a time limit on him, a discipline, a collar, a muzzle, and thousands of other restraints and duties which reduce his life to that of a college-student who is always watched by some vigilant eye and regulated in all his steps, and even in his thoughts. I justly owe him the Doctor's visit and the warm weekly bath when he is washed with soap, because I have condemned him to breathe the smoke of the cigarette; and I deprive him of the speedy races in the pure air, by which he would never suffer from colds, nor indigestion.

I have not the right to the gratitude that he is giving me. And more than that I haven't the right even to reprimand him for those things which I call his faults and oversights.

Poor Dick! It is true that after you have begged me to take you out, you leave me in the middle of the street to go and exchange compliments with the first scabby, ugly cur that you stumble upon. But what do I do myself? How many times in my life have I shunned the company of educated and venerable senators, by whom I was annoyed, and then gone and rubbed elbows with hair-brained people who have the reputation of being corrupt, if they have amused me? With what boldness I inveigh against you, when without permission, you appropriate the leg of a pigeon, and I, for the sake of genteel living, make a good face to the rascals enriched by fraud, and oppression! Why do I complain at your barking when the bell rings, and then listen with endless patience to many unwelcome bores, who make more noise than you, and they do not say anything wiser or better? Why do I despise you when you stick your mouth into something dirty,—and I have read with pleasure so many filthy books? And with pleasure I shake hands with many unclean people who are living just such lives as I read about in the books. How do I dare to complain? Ah, it's a shame, dear Dick.

Oh what a vile beggar is a man sometimes! I went reluctantly to the Municipal Hall to pay your tax. As if it were not an undeserved fortune, a direct gold contract, to have a good friend, faithful, and safe like you, for the miserable sum of four dollars! What do you want now! You that scratch with your paws against my trousers, looking at the door and then at me with the eyes of a beggar? I understand. You are boiling all over with curiosity to go and see who has entered. Go little gossip. Do not make the uproar of wishing to tear some one to pieces as if thieves were the only people that enter my house.

Poor Dick! Even if I hadn't been so affectionate, to him, and even if he did not tell me so many things with his eyes, I would still like him as much for the pleasing recreation that he gives me, with his infinite variety of attitudes and motions which I never before observed in any member of his family. He is so graceful when he stops all of a sudden with one of his front legs suspended and bent in, and with his head inclined down on one side, as if he were caught by a sudden doubt; and when he gambols around in imitation of a disc or caracoles

with the charming elegance of a tiny colt, or he sits before the fire, his hind legs close together, the white breast projecting and with head high, like a self-admiring, newly decorated cavalier posing before the camera.

It is one of the comical features of his manners, whether quiet or in motion that I can see in them a caricature of some human posing and moving. It reminds me of so many listeners in scientific conferences when they slumber, or when they take little naps, while pretending to listen. Dick bows and nods. Lowering his head slowly, and raising it up all at once and then letting it recline again, little by little, in just the same way that they used to do, those gentlemen in the conferences, so that they would not be observed giving that dangling leaden skull, the appearance of a continual approval of the eloquence that was putting them to sleep. When he walks tortuously, with that twisting of his spine, he is so comic that I can never look at him without laughing, again. The old image comes up to me of some old soldiers feeble and exhausted belonging to the ancient national guard, walking in the same twisted manner when they marched on the

drill-grounds, with their harmless rifles on their shoulders, to save Italy. When he winds himself up like a ball, with his mouth toward the South Pole, showing nothing but a half-closed eye, that keeps track of me in all my movements around the room, he recalls to my mind some elderly people wrapped up and sitting by the side of the fire watching, with half an eye, their grand-children, in whom they see the intention of playing a joke.

And isn't it an image of that comic but pitiful spectacle, the imbecility of a man who bursts out and threatens injuries to himself after he has made a blunder, when Dick runs around in a circle, growling, and biting his tail as if it were the appendix of one of his enemies!

And when he stands up on his hind legs like a puppet which has been set up,—omitting his dignity as a quadruped without foreseeing the laughter which he will arouse,—to reach for a piece of cake that is held high over his head,—is he giving any different idea of the cringing ambitions that shame his dignity as a biped who throws himself like a quadruped before the influential personages who show him the ribbon of a cross!

And the way his sonorous snoring and broken yawn ending with a yelp with which he sometimes cuts short the story of a tiresome visitor, makes me think of the ingenuously sincere yawn in which a child gives vent to his ennui in some stupid conversation in the parlour, causing everybody to slyly laugh, just because he expresses their common sentiments, with a frankness forbidden to the well-bred by "The Galateo."\*

And those ears! Those two big ears that now stand up like the flaring mouth of a trumpet, and now fall down like leaves of lettuce, faded and drooping. Now he opens up one ear from

\*The Laws of Etiquette. All the people of quality in Italy learn good manners from "The Galateo." Editor.

\*\*Many, many years ago, growing through a lonely childhood among mature people, how often have I wearied nervously, to the point of distress, under the strain of "some stupid conversation in a parlour",—like your child, over the page! I was too timid and too bound in rules to yawn, so had no relief except wandering thoughts. That was one way to cripple the child's power of concentration; or so it seems to me.

Mary Day Lanier.

March 27th, 1916.

In the sympathetic little gem which Mrs. Lanier has kindly written, she makes a point that De Amicis does not reach,—an educational point,—the crippling of the child's mind by depriving him of the power of concentration.

From that delicate well-mannered yawn of former days there has developed a modern yawn which carries a little apology, "Excuse me!" with it, often accompanied by a patting of the lips by the finger that displays a ring. In fact the yawn has become a study in philosophy.

one side and the other from the opposite side, symbolic of the state of mind of one who is listening to two adversaries talking together, with the intention of profiting from the ideas or meaning of those who are well-posted on the question from both sides without giving the decision to either one. Ah! Those two ears so agile and delicate, that gather simultaneously hundreds of different sounds, near and far, imperceptible to the human hearing! How many intriguing busy-bodies would like to have them!

Oh, yes! even those two dusky spots, which break the white of his hair, like two stains of coffee on a table cloth, remind me of those masses of loud colour which the clowns of the circus have on their backs to amuse the crowds of children, and even those two postmarks which seem as if nature had put them across his back, and at the root of his tail, for a joke, always rouse up in me, I do not know what boyish cheerfulness, silly and serene, when I think that he does not know that he has them. Even the porter's boy was surprised to see them the day that we took Dick out of the bath in his presence.

Here he is again, returned from an expedition all curled up like a ball, on his library chair. Now be quiet a minute while I confide to you a philosophical idea, my dear Dick. If you only knew what curiosity besets me, and makes me think for hours how to penetrate your brain with my mind, to know what you understand, and what are the limits to that intelligence, which constantly increases and decreases to my mental vision, just as an object appears to the eye,—larger as it comes nearer, and smaller as it recedes,—and I wonder what concepts of the mind, what shadows of ideas, the world's spectacle has given you, and our aspect and the act and the sounds escaping from our lips! If you only knew how much mental exhaustion I suffer in trying to measure the distance that lies between us, and to uncover your innermost nature and of the ties which bind us and of the barriers which separate us! If you only knew what an attractive and solemn mystery is locked up away from me in that little head of yours, which lies in my hand like an orange; in that glance of yours that is simple and mysterious at the same time, in which I seem at times to see glimmers of human understanding, and

the effort of the word that cannot come forth, the aggravation of the forced speechlessness, and almost the spasm of a soul compressed in a prison of bone and flesh, that feels the mutilation of the ancient faculties, of which you are preserving a confused reminiscence; if you only knew how it torments me now and then, the thought that I shall never know anything of all this nor will anyone else ever know; and that we could live together for centuries without my succeeding in making the least step forward in the knowledge of your intimate being: of the vision that you have of men and of things. But you are much more fortunate than I am, that you cannot puzzle your brain over these enigmas; and you are good without knowing it, and you love without thinking, and you live to live, ignoring the misfortune and the death. . . . Death! Here is a thought that has never come to me, concerning you.

Come here, Dick: stand up! Give me your paws in my hands, and let us look each other well in the eyes to listen to each other better. What will there be for us, my dear Dick? Shall we stay a long time together? Which of us will be the one that will leave the other?

In truth I should wish it were not you. Oh, for many reasons, but if you should be the one,—if I am destined to see you get old and die, you can rest assured that you will have a respected and tranquil old age, my poor friend; and we will never call any of your brothers to give us the pleasure which you no longer can give, that you will remain the one object of our love and of our care in this house where you first brought back the smiling—and where you were for so many years the only comforter and companion, even if a stroke of misfortune should throw me into a state of deepest poverty I would yet divide my last crust with you, and I would work to the end of my strength, though I had no other obligation, to ease your last days. My dear, my good Dick, you could lose your sight, your teeth, and your voice and be reduced to complete helplessness, a mere body alive only for suffering, but you will never lose my gratitude and my caresses, never; your dead body will not go to the grave without tears, and your memory will be sweet and dear to me as long as my heart shall bear the poniard that has wounded without killing me.

Here he is again who is trembling from the

ears to the paws because he has heard a brotherly voice from far, far away, and he debates within himself whether to leave me or not. Ah! Little one. He is right. He is bored. But it is his destiny. Woe to him who falls into the hands of a confidant, even if it is a dog.

— . . . . What if I should be the first to go—listen to this also, dear Dick—if I shall be the first, will you remember me, when you will never see me any more, when the young master will be the only one left to you? Will you sometimes remember the old master, who has loved you so much? Will you now and then look for him at that desk, where he has many times discontinued his work to take you in his arms? And over that pillow where you now come to greet him every morning, and where, exchanging your greeting he has so many times pressed your head against his cheek, bathed with tears from a hopeless dream? And will you sometimes recall me to the mind of the young master, when you see him sad and thoughtful and make him smile? And will you exhort him with your voice, to go out to meet his friends, and to take you into the country with him, to regain in the open air and in the movement, the love

of life and work? Will you remember? Will you do all this, good Dick, faithful companion of mine, dear comfort of my solitude and my work?

Ah, your straight and shining eyes say "Yes" to me. Your tongue that searches my face tells me more than it would if you could talk, and your wagging tail is promising it to me. And I thank you. And now go. They have rung the bell, I know who it is. It's a gentleman who comes to read me a manuscript. You can salute him with your bark.

END.

## A D D E N D A

### THE EDITOR'S APOLOGY

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This Study is valuable. "Il mio ultimo Amico," My Dog Dick, is valuable or De Amicis would never have written it, nor would J. G. Lista have translated it, nor would our greatest naturalist, John Burroughs, have touched, ever so remotely on the same theme, "The Animal Mind," including the Mind of the Dog.

De Amicis writes lovingly. His heart is full of his subject. He longs to prove that Dick has a mind and a soul. Browning, like De Amicis, is always in search of a soul. He concerns himself about the soul of a dog, Tray, who saves a drowning child and then returns to bring ashore the child's doll.

"Outside should suffice for evidence:

And whoso desires to penetrate  
Deeper, must dive by the spirit-sense—"

"Love greatens and glorifies  
Till God's all aglow to the loving eyes  
In what was mere earth before,"  
says Browning.

And thus De Amicis gathers up his observations with the utmost regard for the truth.

De Amicis makes these points: the dog's quick understanding, ready response, manifestations of intelligence, mental penetration, tenderness, powers of acting a part, pretending to be innocent, varied expressions of the eyes such as a curiosity, reproach, ardent demand of rights, his sense of right. Dick suspects "wag-gery concealed in a menace," and sees "treachery in a caress," detects "ostentatious sweetness." How clever of Dog Dick!

Such are the points selected by De Amicis as signs that the dog has reason.

"A dog has no reason, and so you can not convince him." This is the scientific way of looking at it. "It is the reason that is convinced." Reason demands sufficient grounds for being convinced. We *know* a fact when we *believe* it to be true *on sufficient grounds*. De Amicis with exceeding truthfulness believes only what he knows to be true *on sufficient grounds* and so he observes every detail, and stores it away. He seems to believe in evolution backwards, you might say: "Words that can not come forth," "the aggravation of

forced speechlessness," "the spasm of a soul compressed in a prison of bones and flesh that feels the mutilation of the ancient faculties," so he accounts for the dumbness of Dick. Has a dog ever been known plainly to enunciate words? I have read of one such instance in some newspaper. It certainly is not true that the dog confines his words to "bow wow," or "woof, woof."

Every point, however, that De Amicis has made in the study of Dog Dick is well taken and worth studying, the strongest being—"Does he *know* the secret in my mind?" "He *can* understand. He *does* understand." Oh, what a climax is that!

What difference does it make whether a dog has a mind or not? What difference does it make whether a woman, or a man, or a child has a mind or not! The more mind, the less confusion, the greater happiness and the more truth, throughout the whole world. How many of us have seen a dog "reason it out alone?"

I once saw G. W. Cable standing on a corner shaking with laughter. Across the street from him, there paraded a much barbered Russian Poodle, a mane like a lion's, a shaven body, a

pink ribbon at the end of a barbered tail, a tuft around each foot. The Poodle walked along like a dog of good pedigree, in measured tread and unconscious of his decorations. He was absurdly funny. But Mr. Cable was not laughing at him. In the street was a little common cur, "eaten up with curiosity," trying to "reason it out alone."

"Who is that?" he seemed to say. "How cool he is! I must investigate." The cur had many expressions in his face, one at a time.

It was the cur that caused Mr. Cable to laugh, his intelligent recognition of the incongruous which Science calls Reason. The poor dog does not get any credit for having Reason, or a mind because he does not laugh. Lista says that he had a dog that did laugh. Dick never laughs and De Amicis says nothing on the point, but Burroughs discredits the intelligence, or mind of animals because they have no perception of the incongruous.

"Il mio ultimo Amico," Dog Dick, is the most subtle, the most elusive, the nearest to the untranslatable of any Italian text I have ever seen. It can not be translated by the use of mere words, or correct construction of mere

sentences, or by grammatical rules. The spirit in it is the essential. "Dive by the spirit-sense."

I have seen many a triumph among the thousands of pupils that have come to me in my years of teaching but never a triumph so great as the translation of "Il mio ultimo Amico."

Mary E. Burt, June, 1916.



















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